

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 166
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 3952

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, IN, CH
SUBJECT: SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

REF: DELHI 3771

SUMMARY: CONTINUING ITS HIGH-PROFILE VISIT TO INDIA, THE CHINESE DELEGATION LED BY WANG PING-NAN HAD A CORDIAL MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER DESAI MARCH 11. WANG ALSO HAD A PRIVATE MEETING WITH MRS. INDIRA GANDHI DURING A RECEPTION AT THE PRC EMBASSY. IN PARLIAMENT FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WOULD GO TO PEKING IN DUE TIME AFTER CAREFUL PREPARATION, BUT CAUTIONED THAT GIVEN PAST HISTORY, THERE WAS NO CAUSE FOR EUPHORIA ABOUT SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS. THE MEA JOINT SECRETARY (EAST) ECHOED THIS VIEW AND CONVEYED TO US THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT THE
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CHINESE ARE MORE EAGER FOR THE VISIT THAN ARE THE INDIANS.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE CHINESE "UNOFFICIAL" DELEGATION LED BY WANG PING-NAN MET WITH PRIME MINISTER DESAI FOR AN HOUR MARCH 11. AN MEA SPOKESMAN LATER GAVE A PRESS BRIEFING, WHICH APPEARS TO BE AS THOROUGH AND AUTHORITATIVE AS THE BRIEFING ON THE WANG-VAJPAYEE

DISCUSSION (REFTEL). THE SPOKESMAN DESCRIBED THE MEETING AS "WARM AND CORDIAL". WANG REPORTEDLY CONVEYED TO DESAI THE "WARM-EST REGARDS" OF PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG AND CALLED THE MEETING WITH DESAI A "GREAT PRIVILEGE FOR THE DELEGATION" AND A "GESTURE" TOWARD CHINA. WANG IS SAID TO HAVE ALLUDED TO THE BORDER DISPUTE WHEN HE PLACE BILATERAL PROBLEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF 2000 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP. HE ALSO REFERRED AGAIN TO MAO'S 1970 STATEMENT ABOUT INDIA, AND HE POINTED OUT THE REFERENCES TO FRIENDSHIP WITH INDIA IN THE RECENT FOREIGN POLICY REPORT TO THE PNC AND IN TENG HSIAO PING'S REMARKS IN NEPAL. WANG ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT ALL PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED ON THE BASIS OF THE FIVE PRINCIPLES AND WITH "PATIENCE, MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION AND COMMON UNDERSTANDING". IN RESPONSE, DESAI SAID THAT HE HAD NOTED THE STATEMENTS OF THE CHINESE LEADERS AND HAD RECIPROCATED BY STATING THAT INDIA WAS WILLING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AND EXTEND FRIENDLY CONTACTS. DESAI ASKED HIS BEST WISHES TO BE CONVEYED TO HUA AND DESCRIBED THE WARM RECEPTION ACCORDED THE DELEGATION IN INDIA AS INDICATIVE OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT TOWARD CHINA. A SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE BORDER QUESTION WAS NOT "DISCUSSED" PER SE, BUT THAT IT HAD "COME UP" AND BOTH WANG AND DESAI "WERE OF THE VIEW THAT IT SHOULD BE RESOLVED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS AND BY PEACEFUL MEANS". THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT TIBET HAD NOT BEEN MENTIONED IN THE MEETING.

2. WANG ALSO HAD A 30-MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH MRS. INDIRA
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GANDHI, WITH ONLY AN INTERPRETER PRESENT, DURING A RECEPTION AT THE PRC EMBASSY MARCH 12. MRS. GANDHI AFTERWARDS TOLD THE PRESS THAT SHE HAD A FRIENDLY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH WANG, WHOM SHE HAD MET WHEN SHE VISITED CHINA WITH HER FATHER, AND THAT SHE AND WANG "WERE ONLY REMINISCING". THE DELEGATION HAS BEEN RECEIVING EXCELLENT PRESS COVERAGE OF ITS ACTIVITIES, WHICH HAVE INCLUDED WELL-RECEIVED VISITS TO DELHI AND NEHRU UNIVERSITIES. THE PRESS, HOWEVER, HAS ALSO PROMINENTLY FEATURED TIBETAN PROTEST MARCHES IN DELHI AND CHANDIGARGH, WHICH SOME OF THE DELEGATION VISITED THIS WEEKEND.

3. MEANWHILE, THE GOI CONTINUES TO TREAT CAUTIOUSLY THE INVITATION TO FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE TO VISIT PEKING. ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT MARCH 9, VAJPAYEE REPEATED THE OFFICIAL BRIEFING (REFTEL) THAT THE INVITATION HAD BEEN ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE AND WOULD TAKE PLACE AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME AND AFTER DUE PREPARATION. HE ADDED, "AFTER WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE PAST, THERE SHOULD BE NO EUPHORIA IN OUR RELATIONS WITH CHINA".

4. MEA JOINT SECRETARY (EAST) C.V. RANGANATHAN CONFIRMED TO EMBOFFS MARCH 10 THE ACCURACY OF PRESS ACCOUNTS OF WANG'S MEETING WITH VAJPAYEE (REFTEL) AND CONVEYED THE DECIDED IMPRESSION

THAT THE CHINESE ARE KEENER THAN THE INDIANS ON THE PROPOSED VISIT TO PEKING. RANGANATHAN SAID THAT WANG REQUESTED A PRIVATE MEETING WITH VAJPAYEE FOLLOWING THE DELEGATION SESSION IN ORDER TO EXTEND THE INVITATION TO VISIT. VAJPAYEE, HE SAID, EXPLAINED TO WANG THE NEED FOR CAREFUL PREPARATION AND TOLD HIM THAT ALTHOUGH A DELEGATION SUCH AS WANG'S COULD COME TO INDIA FOR THE PURPOSES OF GOOD WILL ALONE, THIS WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION FOR A TRIP BY A FOREIGN MINISTER WHO WAS AN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE. THE

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PEOPLE, VAJPAYEE SAID, WOULD EXPECT A MORE CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENT. HOWEVER, THE CHINESE, RANGANATHAN SAID, VIEW THE VISIT AS IMPORTANT IN ITSELF, AND THEY HAVE POINTED ON OCCASION TO THE FACT THAT THERE HAD BEEN IN THE PAST THREE HIGH-LEVEL CHINESE VISITS TO INDIA BUT ONLY ONE COMPARABLE INDIAN VISIT TO CHINA. THIS THEY INTERPRET AS AN INDICATION OF INSUFFICIENT RESPECT BY INDIA FOR CHINA. ASKED IF THE CHINESE APPRECIATED THE DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS THE GOI HAD TO CONSIDER IN ADVANCING SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS, RANGANATHAN SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT THE CHINESE WERE REALLY SENSITIVE TO THE DOMESTIC POLITICS

OF INDIA. NOTING THAT THE PRC "LOBBY" WAS VERY ACTIVE, HE SAID THAT THE CHINESE TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF "OUR OPEN SOCIETY" AND HE COMPLAINED THAT DETAILS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVERSATIONS WITH CHINESE OFFICIALS REGARDING FURTHER BILATERAL EXCHANGES INVARIABLY CROP UP IN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS. THIS INFORMATION, RANGANATHAN SAID, CAN ONLY COME FROM THE PRC EMBASSY.

5. RANGANATHAN SAID THAT THE BORDER ISSUE HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED IN THE VAJPAYEE-WANG MEETING, ALTHOUGH IT WAS ALLUDED TO IN THE REFERENCES TO THE PROBLEMS IN THE SINO-INDIAN RELATIONSHIP. ASKED WHAT POSSIBILITIES THERE WERE FOR "CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENT" SHORT OF A BREAKTHROUGH ON THE BORDER ISSUE, RANGANATHAN SAID THAT THE MEA HAD NOT GIVEN THOUGHT TO THIS QUESTION SINCE THE INVITATION HAD JUST BEEN RECEIVED (ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE MEA HAD BEEN EXPECTING WANG TO BRING ONE). RANGANATHAN SAID THAT SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS COULD NOT BE VIEWED SEPARATELY FROM CHINA'S RELATIONS WITH ALL ITS NEIGHBORS, FROM BURMA EAST. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE MENTIONED THAT THE BURMESE WERE NOT HAPPY ABOUT REMARKS TENG HSIAO-PING MADE DURING HIS VISIT TO BURMA WHICH WERE SEEN AS A RESTATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR BURMESE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS. RANGANATHAN ALSO SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE CHINESE DOMESTIC EVENTS HAD MUCH IMPACT ON CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY; WHAT WAS NOTABLE, HE SAID, WAS THE CONSISTENCY OF PRC POLICY OVER THE YEARS. REGARDING HUA'S WORKING REPORT ON FOREIGN POLICY, RANGANATHAN WAS NOT SURPRISED BY THE REFERENCE TO INDIA, AND SAID THAT WHAT WAS INTERESTING WAS THAT THE PRC AND INDIA TAKE THE SAME VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH HE MADE OBLIGATORY REFERENCES TO WHAT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN TRADE AND EXCHANGES OVER THE PAST YEAR AND ONE HALF, RANGANATHAN CLEARLY CONVEYED THE VIEW THAT THERE WERE NO GROUNDS FOR "EUPHORIA" ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SINO-INDIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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RELATIONS. HOWEVER, HE ALLOWED AS HOW THE MEA "HAD SINGULARLY FAILED" IN CONVEYING THIS TO SEGMENTS OF THE INDIAN PRESS AND PUBLIC. GOHEEN

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